FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
21-30	ORLEANS		EAS.14

Town/City: Town of Eastham

Place: *(neighborhood or village)*:
South Eastham

Address: 855 State Highway

Historic Name: Obed C. & Betsey Smith House

Uses: Present: single family residence & medical office

Original: single-family residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1864

Source: deeds, historic maps, vital records, censuses

Style/Form: Greek Revival/crosswing

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:
Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
garage

Major Alterations *(with dates)*:
Wings added on rear, 20th c.
Shed dormer added on crosswing

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

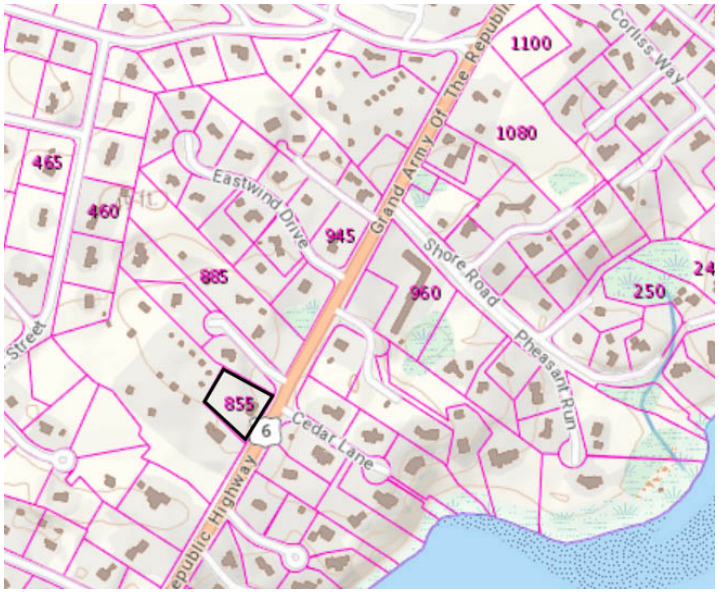
Acreage: 0.90

Setting: The house and associated buildings are situated on the State Highway amid dense roadside development comprised of historic properties and more recent summer cottages. It overlooks Town Cove across the highway.

Photograph

View from NE.

Locus Map (north at top)



Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson
Larson Fisher Associates

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: June 2020

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Obed C. & Betsy Smith House, built ca. 1864, is a story-and-a-half wood frame single dwelling with a crosswing plan. The front facades of both wings are on an equal plane with the front-gable section containing an entrance in a distinctive trabeated architrave offset by two windows; three windows are crowded into the upper-story gable. Windows have cornices and the corners and eave lines distinguished with pilasters and friezes respectively. Four windows are spaced across the façade of the cross-gable wing. The pilasters, friezes and window cornices continue on the crosswing; a shed dormer was added to the roof later. The north side of the house contains two windows indicating the presence of two principal rooms within; a chimney likely was in the dividing partition. A one-story wing with a flat roof was added to the northwest corner of the house; an exterior brick chimney is centered on the north end. A second addition was added to the southwest corner of the house sometime later.

The house is sited at the frontage of a one-acre parcel set back from the street behind a small yard with numerous mature trees. A driveway enters just south of the house and runs back to a mid-20th century two-car garage. The rear of the parcel is wooded.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

In late February 1863 Abijah Mayo (45 South Eastham Road, EAS.13) sold mariner Obed C. Smith 5.5 acres between the old and new county roads. The deed stated the parcel had "a cottage dwelling house" and outbuildings on it.[1] Henry Knowles Cobb (1826-75) had mortgaged this property to Mayo (his brother-in-law) in 1857, and evidently lost it in foreclosure. Cobb had bought the land from Jesse Lincoln (born 1805), whose father Joseph (1770-1842) had sold him his remaining real estate in 1840. The "cottage dwelling house" likely was Joseph Lincoln's house, which would have dated to about 1820.[2] The extant house was built for Obed C. Smith and his wife, Betsy J. Nickerson, soon after Abijah Mayo sold them the land in 1863.

Born in 1836 in Orleans, Obed C. Smith was the son of Lewis and Mehitable Smith, and he grew up in his parents' household at 10 Smith Lane. Federal and state censuses between 1850 and 1860 describe him as a mariner living with his parents and siblings. In 1861 he married Betsy J. Nickerson of Eastham, and the 1865 state census lists his household directly after Abijah Mayo's. He and his wife had two young sons, Alberto and Gideon, and Betsy Nickerson Smith's parents, Josiah and Eunice Nickerson, were also part of the household. In 1870 the census credits Obed Smith with $875 in real estate, and his household was the same save for his father-in-law, who had died in 1866.

By 1877 Obed C. Smith had become a surfman at the Nauset Life-Saving Station, and by 1880 both of his older sons were working, Alberto as a harness maker's apprentice and Gideon as a fisherman. Another son, Fred, had been born in 1871 but died the next year of scarlatina. In 1896 Betsy Nickerson Smith died, and by 1900 Obed Smith appears to have rented 855 State Highway; in that year he was boarding in the nearby home of fisherman Luther M. Ryder. He was living at his son Gideon's home in Orleans when he died in 1906. The 855 State Highway property passed to his sons Alberto and Gideon, and in 1908 Alberto Smith, then living in Charlestown, deeded his share of the property to his brother. In 1911 Gideon Smith sold the property to Bertha Christine King of North Bellingham, and about a year later King sold it to the sisters Nora F. and Emma M. Garrison of Kalamazoo, Michigan.[3]

The Garrison sisters were the daughters of William (1821-87) and Nancy Fulton Garrison (1825-1906), who married in Valparaiso, Indiana, where Nora was born in 1861 and Emma in 1869. In 1900 Nora Garrison was a dressmaker and Emma a

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[1] Abijah Mayo to Obed C. Smith, 28 February 1863, BCD 81:230, and BCD 81:140. Smith paid $664 for the parcel.

[2] Henry K. Cobb to Abijah Mayo, 1 June 1857, BCD 66:118 states that Cobb had acquired the estate—five acres with a dwelling and other buildings, and another nine acres between the old and new county roads—from Jesse Lincoln, but no deed documenting the sale was recorded. Abijah Mayo married Phoebe Knowles Cobb in 1836; Henry K. Cobb was her younger brother. Jesse Lincoln moved to Orleans by 1850, and Cobb left Eastham for the Albany area after 1860. A much later deed (11 May 1885, BCD 170:17) appears to confirm this earlier sale.

[3] Alberto O. Smith, Charlestown, to Gideon L. Smith, 22 July 1908, BCD 289:352; Gideon L. Smith, Orleans, to Bertha Christine King, North Bellingham, 28 March 1911, BCD 310:188; Bertha C. King, North Bellingham, to Nora F. Garrison and Emma M. Garrison, Kalamazoo MI, 6 April 1912, BCD 316:486. "Deaths," *Yarmouth Register*, 5 May 1906, 5.

dry goods salesperson. The 1920 Eastham census lists the sisters in this neighborhood; Nora was not employed, but Emma was an embroiderer of "retail regalia." In 1926 Nora Garrison deeded the 855 State Highway property to her sister, and she died two years later in Kalamazoo. Soon after, Emma Garrison became the long-time housekeeper for Dr. Henry A. White and his wife Zora, who lived with their three children on King's Highway in Orleans; she is shown as a lodger and servant in their home in the 1930 census, and she died there in 1938.[4]

In her will Emma Garrison left the South Eastham property to Hazel Martha Garrison Estrada of New York City, whose relation to Emma has not been established. Hazel Estrada was the wife of musician Charles Estrada, a native of Guatemala who had come to the United States in 1916 to record for the Victor Talking Machine Company, according to his 1953 obituary. He came to the United States under the name Don Carlos and directed Don Carlos' Marimba Band, which played on the radio across the country by the early 1930s. He later appeared in Broadway musicals and in various hotels and theaters. Estrada married Hazel Garrison, a native of La Crosse, Wisconsin, in 1926, and after his retirement in 1939 they lived in Kendallville, Indiana, where Estrada was custodian of the local Elks club. Yet, the Estradas owned 855 State Highway only briefly: they sold it in November 1938 to Louis and Harriet B. Poutasse of Staten Island.[5] They too owned the property for only a short time. In September 1959 they sold 855 State Highway to David J. and Mary T. Johnson.[6]

The Johnsons sold the property four years later, in 1963, to Walter M. and Barbara Hamilton, who owned it for the next thirty years. In 1993, after Walter Hamilton's death, his executor sold 855 State Highway to Paula J. Sperry, who placed it in trust in 2002 and returned it to her individual ownership in 2004. Sperry was the owner of record in 2020.[7]

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[4] On Emma's work for the Whites and her death see "Orleans," *Yarmouth Register*, 20 October 1928, 5; 14 January 1933, 7, and 4 January 1938, 4.
[5] Hazel M. Garrison Estrada, New York NY, to Louis and Harriet B. Poutasse, New Brighton, Staten Island NY, 16 November 1938, BCD 546:324; Charles E. Ingersoll and Henry A. White, both Orleans, executors will Emma M. Garrison, Orleans, to Louis and Harriet B. Poutasse, 6 July 1939, BCD 554:372.
[6] Louis and Harriet B. Poutasse to David J. and Mary T. Johnson, 23 September 1959, BCD 1056:127
[7] David J. and Mary T. Johnson to Walter M. and Barbara Hamilton, 14 August 1963, BCD 1213:201; Deane A. Straiton, executor estate Walter M. Hamilton, to Paula J. Sperry, 12 November 1993, BCD 8884:50; Paula J. Sperry, Provincetown, to Paula J. Sperry, trustee Paula J. Sperry Nominee Trust, 19 September 2002, BCD 15817:58; Paula J. Sperry, trustee Paula J. Sperry Nominee Trust, to Paula J. Sperry, 5 February 2004, BCD 18204:341 and BCD 18205:24.

PHOTOGRAPHS

(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2019 unless otherwise noted)

View from SE.

View from NE

View from SE.

View of garage from east.